

PREFACE

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121 THE investigation of which this book is a record was made with the assistance of a Leverhulme Fellowship for the years 1937 and 1938. As the work was carried out alone, and in a field hitherto neglected by ethnologists, I am conscious that there must be many omissions and oversights in this survey of the Min Chia culture as it is to-day. The language barrier was certainly not wholly surmounted, for while I cannot claim to have learned to speak Min Chia with real fluency, the Min Chia of the less educated class do not speak Chinese without difficulty and cannot express all their thought in that language. The vocabulary printed as an appendix will no doubt reveal the effects of these difficulties, and the system of romanisation adopted for Min Chia, being based on English and not on the Wade system used for Chinese, may not meet with the approval of all readers. My justification for this must be that I have endeavoured to render Min Chia pronunciation as it is sounded, and that the vocabulary was made primarily for my own use when learning the language. I can only hope that this first attempt to record the Min Chia language and its grammar may prove of some interest to specialists.

ooo While in Yunnan I received at all times the assistance and hospitality of the missionaries of the China Inland Mission, and I wish especially to acknowledge my debt to Mr. and Mrs. W. Allen, Mr. H. Owen and Mr. E. Holmes, of the C.I.M. in Ta Li. I also had the advantage of consulting the late Mr. Fraser of this Mission, whose knowledge of the peoples of Yunnan, and especially the Li Su, was unrivalled.

The debt of pupil to teacher, so well understood in China, is due to Professor B. Malinowski, under whom I studied anthropology before venturing into the field.

[p.vii] [pp. iv, v, vi, are blank]